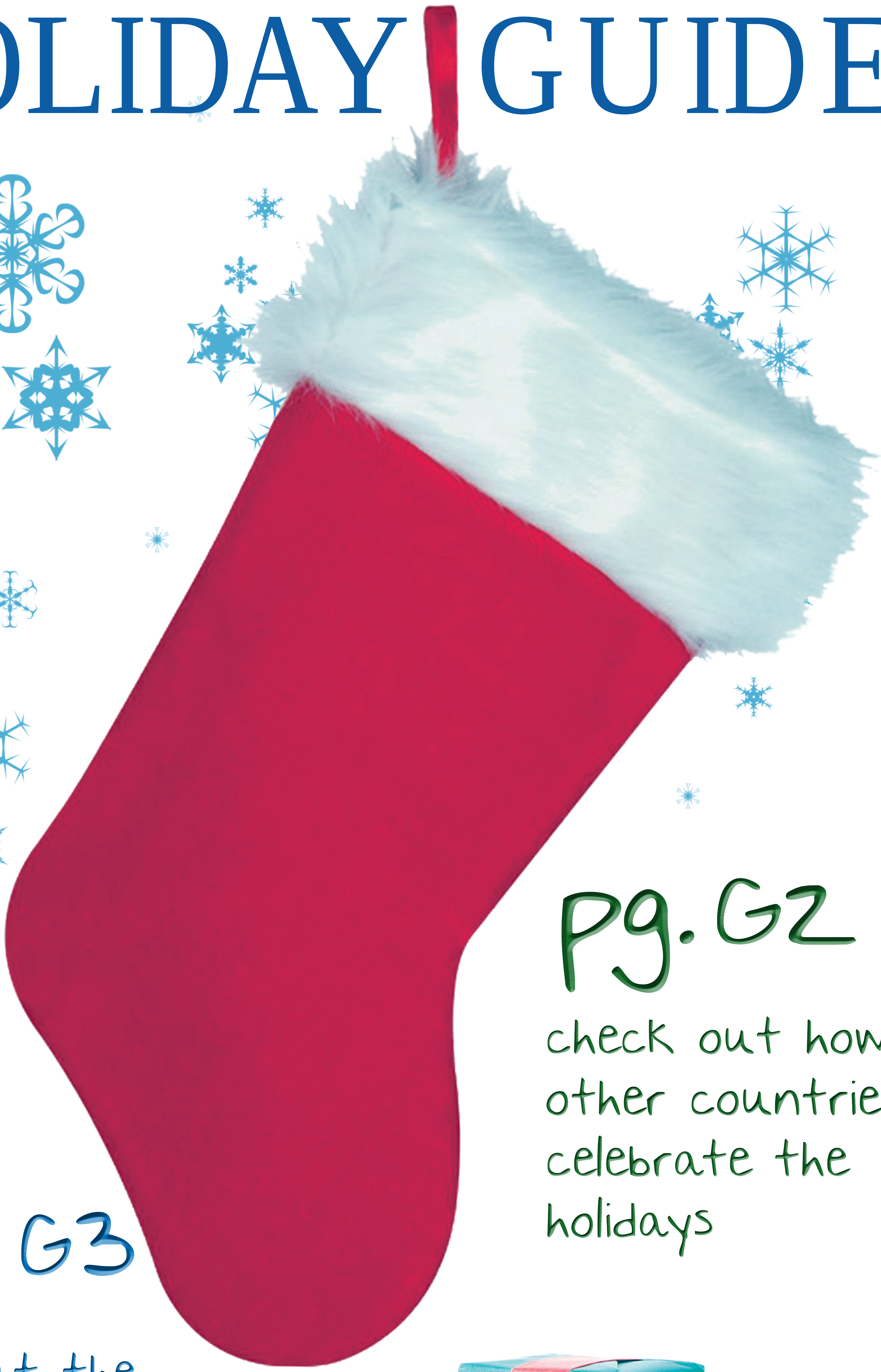
HOLIDAY GUIDE



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check out how other countries celebrate the holidays

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find out the difference between real and fake Christmas trees

kansas state collegian
monday, november 29, 2010

Dorms display holiday diversity

Residence hall staffs work for neutrality in festive winter decor

Caitlin Whetstone
junior staff writer

As the weather drops to colder temperatures, students in the residence halls and temporary living participate in many ways to bring the spirit of the holidays right to their doors, or halls.

One of the main objectives the residence hall staff strives to accomplish is the celebration of different holidays during the winter season, not just Christmas. This is done to address the diversity of students in the residence halls and their traditions.

"We want to be respectful of what students choose in regard to the holidays," said Nick Lander, assistant director for the department of housing and dining.

Several holidays celebrated other than Christmas include Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. The Chinese New Year, which takes place in January and February, is another holiday down the road multiple students might incorporate into their stay.

A way to keep the winter season holidays neutral among all students is to incorporate decorations that feature a winter theme in places like the lobbies and hallways, rather than only Christmas decorations. Some of these decorations include snowflakes, snowmen and candy canes. This gives off a general holiday theme and keeps public areas impartial. When it comes to residents' rooms, as long as the decorations follow fire restrictions and safety, decorations can pertain to the residents' choice holiday. For those who celebrate Christmas, a 3-foot Christmas tree, strands of lights, garland to surround the windows or a door wreath are a couple of ideas to get the room started.

If residents decide to decorate their doors on the outside, one rule they must follow is to not cover more than 40 percent of the door with decorations.

Residents also have the chance to incorporate Wildcat spirit into their decorations. K-State ornaments, stockings, candy canes and wreaths are available for the holiday season at places like *shop.kstatesports.com.*

The celebration of the holidays goes beyond decorations. One of the examples of programs some halls participate in is called Secret Snowflakes, entailing residents to draw names of other residents for a gift exchange.

Some halls participate in fundraisers to think of others that are less fortunate. One way this is achieved is through adopt-a-family programs. Residents of the hall get together and accumulate clothing, food and gifts to give away to a local family. Clothing drives are also common. The halls raise and collect coats, gloves, hats and other warm clothing needed for the cold months for those who need them.

file photo
Residents on the sixth floor of Moore Hall decorate their floor lobby for the holiday season last year.

Indian Christmas like American, only smaller

Sakshi Pahwa

Illustration by Andrey Ukrazhenko

Holiday season in the USA is typically marked by the arrival of Christmas. Christmas decorations are seen all over the country a month beforehand.

India, being a secular country, is home to a number of religions. With each religion comes an abundance of festivals. And with each festival is associated a plethora of celebrations, fun and food.

India has a predominant Roman Catholic influence in some regions, such as Goa and Pondicherry, which were colonized by the Portuguese and the French, respectively. The rest of India was mostly under the influence of the British and some small parts under other European nations. It is because of this European influence for a number of years that India first got introduced to Christmas. Although India gained independence in 1947, many of the European traditions and festivals remained.

Like many other countries, Christmas is celebrated in India on Dec. 25. However, the magnitude of celebration is quite different. In the U.S., Christmas decorations are seen a month before the holiday. Huge Christmas trees, lights, ornaments and presents adorn the streets, shops and homes everywhere. Similar festivities are observed in India but on a smaller scale, except in some parts of the nation. The Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is a very significant custom of the Catholics on the Eastern side of the world. On Christmas Eve, churches are decorated with flowers and candles and Midnight Masses are organized. Most kids in India know about Santa Claus and the gifts he brings for them, if they are well-behaved. Typically, in cities, the sight of people dressed up as Santa and distributing little gifts is not uncommon.

A big, very crowded, and one of the most diverse cities, Mumbai — where I come from — is the business capital of

See INDIA, Page G4

Foreigners travel, work over holiday vacations

Balasubramanyn Meenakshisundaram

The holiday season is always one students look forward to. It promises a good break from school and some quality time with family and friends; a de-stressor before the intense and chaotic finals week.

However, ever wonder what the others do, those who do not celebrate Thanksgiving and other American holidays?

That would narrow it down to the international population of the campus and city. Well, we do have quite a few things that we usually do during the long holidays. Here are some of the most common holiday plans for international students.

At the top of the list is probably traveling and changing roles from student to tourist.

Thanksgiving break, being the longest of holidays apart from winter and summer breaks, allows students to venture farther from Manhattan. The cold weather also inspires travel to warmer destinations like Florida, Las Vegas and other popular places. I have heard of friends going on cruises to the Caribbean or the Bahamas. Traveling to Puerto Rico is also a good idea to beat the cold and get some warm sunshine and cool sea breeze.

Winter break people travel to New York to catch the ball dropping in Times Square on New Year's Eve. Those who do not enjoy the cold or the crowd go to warmer destinations mentioned above. Some make use of the break and travel to their homelands to see family.

The close but related second to tourism is people traveling to various cities in the U.S. to visit members of their family or friends. Many international students have relatives scattered far and wide across this country. They are always eager to have people over so they can wipe off part of the guilt of not having visited their homeland in years.

Also, students get an opportunity to live with someone who is family and spend some time conversing in their mother tongue, eating some good native food, going around and visiting local attractions or catching a native movie — all expenses paid.

The nerdy and/or the unfortunate, those who do not have relatives here in the U.S. or those who are usually graduate students constantly chasing research deadlines, end up staying in town and working the week away like it were any other. The advantage of doing this is they can catch up on pending work and get on par with their work so the rest of the semester goes easier.

See ABROAD, Page G3

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Decision determines upkeep, cost

Choices of both real, fake Christmas trees differ in style, price range, size

Lisa Barry
staff writer

image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Faux or fir? The question remains for many who are in search of a Christmas tree to deck the halls with this holiday season. When deciding between an artificial or real Christmas tree, there are a few factors to take into consideration.

How much effort one wants to dedicate to acquiring a tree is the first decision to make. An artificial tree simply requires a trip to Wal-Mart, Target or one of several department stores in the area or typing a credit card number into a box on the website of any Christmas tree manufacturer.

Real Christmas trees, however, demand more work on the part of the customer.

"People can walk through the field and once they choose a tree that they want, they can cut it themselves or we have guys that cut it for them," said Beth Gallaher of Gallaher Christmas Tree Farm in Manhattan. "Once they pick their tree out, they put it in a tree shaker."

Tree shakers prevent customers from taking home unwanted bird nests and other wildlife.

Decorating and upkeep is also a little different depending on which type of tree is chosen. Once the tree is out of the box, there is generally a simple assembly process followed by an assortment of lights, garland or ornaments. Artificial trees now commonly come pre-lit.

After cutting down a real tree, it is important to get the tree to its home and start watering it.

"When it's cut, get it into water as soon as you get it home," said Nadine Lee of Lee's Christmas Trees in Junction City. "They will take a lot of water."

Where to place a real tree in a house is also important to consider.

"It's not good to keep it near a heat vent or fireplace because that will tend to dry them out," Gallaher said.

Prices on both types of trees vary. Gallaher Christmas Tree Farm operates with two set prices, one price for trees under six feet tall and another price for any tree taller than six feet. Lee's Christmas Trees attaches a different price tag to each tree according to its size. Most trees on both farms fall between $30 and $65.

Wal-Mart has full-sized artificial trees priced from $34.95 to $248 depending on size, style and quality. J.C. Penney in Manhattan is only selling one full-sized tree for $149.

When taking into consideration the price of a tree, it is also necessary to consider how long the tree will last. Though a real Christmas tree might be cheaper in some cases, they also have to be replaced each year while an artificial tree could be stored in a box and set up again year after year.

Overall appearance also plays a part in choosing a Christmas tree.

"Some people don't realize, they don't naturally grow in that shape," Gallaher said.

Shearing is what keeps the trees from looking bushy and instead gives them the desired Christmas tree cone shape. Each Christmas tree farm grows different types of trees depending on the climate. Some farms import Frasier fir trees, which have become high in demand. Each different type of pine has a distinct shape to its needles, giving the pines certain looks.

People can also purchase artificial trees in different styles and colors that imitate the different types of needles. In addition, artificial trees also come in colors such as silver or hot pink.

Adah Olson of J.C. Penney said the last Christmas tree she purchased was an artificial tree.

"It looked better than any other real ones that I had purchased before," Olson said.

Christmas trees also become an environmental issue. Many tree farms replant a tree for each tree they cut down and, after Christmas is over, real Christmas trees can be recycled.

While they are still planted, real Christmas trees help absorb carbon dioxide while the production of fake Christmas trees actually adds to pollution. The pollution is caused because artificial trees are made mostly of a plastic known as polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, which emits carcinogens during production.

Even though many see cutting their own tree as a tradition, Olson said some people just don't have the time for it.

There are several practical pros and cons to weigh while choosing a Christmas tree, but for some it just comes down to history.

"Some people that have been coming for years, when they were children, and now they're coming back as adults with their kids," Gallaher said. "It's something they look forward to; it's a memory."

Month offers holiday, other events

Musical acts, parade scheduled in Manhattan

Austin Enns
senior staff writer

December is a hectic time of year for students due to the stress of dead week and finals piled on top of the normal holiday rush. Students wishing to take a mental break from the chaos have different options to be social this month.

PARADE

One of the first events of the month will be the Mayor's Spirit of the Holidays Lighted Parade on Dec. 3. The parade is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. at Manhattan Town Center and will move down Poyntz Avenue and end in Triangle City Park by Aggieville.

After the parade ends, the mayor plans to give awards for the Best Youth Float, Best Use of Lights, Spirit of the Breadbasket and the Mayor's Trophy. After presenting the awards, the Mayor's Holiday Tree will be lit. The K-State baseball team will be collecting canned goods for the Flint Hills Breadbasket, and the K-State Choir will be caroling with the crowd.

K-STATE SINGERS SHOW

The K-State Singers are also scheduled to perform on Dec. 3 at 7:30 p.m. in All Faiths Chapel. There is no admission charge.

Meghan Rush, member of the group and junior in English, said the show will be about an hour in length and will consist of about 15 seasonal songs about winter and Christmas.

Rush said the group designed its own choreography for the show.

"Usually we have a choreographer that helps choreograph our numbers, but this time every member had a song to choreograph," Rush said.

CONCERTS

Auntie Mae's Parlor plans to feature the band Meatshank on Dec. 16. Jeff Denney, owner of Auntie Mae's, said Meatshank is not the establishment's usual type of band.

"This is our one metal show of the year," Denney said.

Cover charge for the concert will be $3, and Denney said the bar will have a special Coors Glass Boot night. Patrons who buy a glass boot full of beer can keep the boot. The event is limited to those who are 21 and older, and Denney said the event is scheduled to start around 10 p.m.

For those who prefer western music, the Scott Ford Band is scheduled to play on Dec. 18 at R.C. McGraw's. Nick Powers, co-owner of R.C. McGraw's, said the band will start around 9:30 p.m. and the cover charge is $5. The Scott Ford Band is a red-dirt country band, and the concert is open for people 18 and older. Powers said specials will include $3 pounders and $4 bombs.

Planning ahead could improve break

Sandi Lam

Upcoming project deadlines, one review session after another, multiple potentially grade-changing tests in one week. When treading water in the pool of academic life gets tiring, there is a tendency to long for winter break. Once winter break begins, however, we soon are struck with a realization: there is not a lot to do. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to make the most of winter break and transform it into the satisfying reward we hardworking students deserve.

There are standard things to do that are widely suggested and seem to be universally important, such as spending time with the family. Sleeping is a popular activity for many and if you pair that with another cliche suggestion, reading, you wouldn't even have to get out of bed. If you are looking to make money and fear boredom, getting a job is the pathway to winter break success. Stores like Bath and Body Works and Hallmark hire for the holiday season, which could also hook you up with discounted Christmas gifts.

A month of stressless living is a perfect time to explore hobbies that school life does not allow time for. This can be combined with Christmas shopping. It doesn't have to be done in a few days or have to be a chore — what happened to homemade gifts? The cost of giving gifts drops dramatically when you make them yourself, and the level of self-enjoyment increases.

Take advantage of the season and go sledding or ice-skating, throw a holiday party and enjoy a light display. If this type of adventure excites you, maybe you should invest in a road trip. There are also interesting sights close by. I have never seen the "World's Largest Ball of Twine" in Cawker City, Kan., but I hear it is a roadside delight.

Taking the altruistic approach to the break is also a fulfilling option. Volunteering time at a soup kitchen or ringing bells for the Salvation Army could bring you unexpected joy. If you want to spend most of your time at home, you can still give back to the community by getting friends or your own family to chip in to adopt a family that would appreciate holiday gifts.

Whether you prefer surrounding yourself with crowds out and about, volunteering your time or spending quiet time alone, winter break has the potential to be as exciting or as relaxing as you want to make it.

Sandi Lam is a junior in architecture. Please send comments to *edge@spub.ksu.edu.*

ABROAD | Study, travel available

Continued from Page G2

There are perks for doing so. These students get to strut around a nearly empty town, maybe catch a movie and go to a restaurant to get a good meal. They also have the advantage of showing at the many superstores at night that have great deals after Black Friday. For the married, it is a time they can spend in leisure with their spouses, not having to make a dash for school.

The local community is also kind enough to include the rest in their celebration of the festivals. American students usually invite their non-American friends home with them to take part in the festivities. Colleagues get together with their families and have their own parties. They also visit local attractions, picnic around the lake, camp, fish or indulge in other leisure activities.

Overall, there are plenty of options for the international community to spend holidays any way they want to, be it academic or fun. The doors will remain closed for those that are scared of kicking them open, but for the creative and innovative minds, there are a million ways to spend a single day.

Balasubramanyn Meenakshisundaram is a graduate student in electrical and computer engineering. Please send comments to *opinion@spub.ksu.edu.*

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INDIA | Traditions, festivals span country during holidays

Continued from Page G2

India. A sizeable population of Mumbai celebrates Christmas, mostly in the Roman Catholic way. It is a pleasure watching the decorations at some people's homes during this time. Some display the Nativity scene, some simply display giant star-shaped paper lanterns and decorate their homes with candles.

In southern Indian states, some people light clay oil lamps and place them on the roofs of their houses to signify the birth of Jesus Christ as the light of the world. In Northeastern India, some tribes visit neighboring villages and go caroling to tell people the story of Christmas.

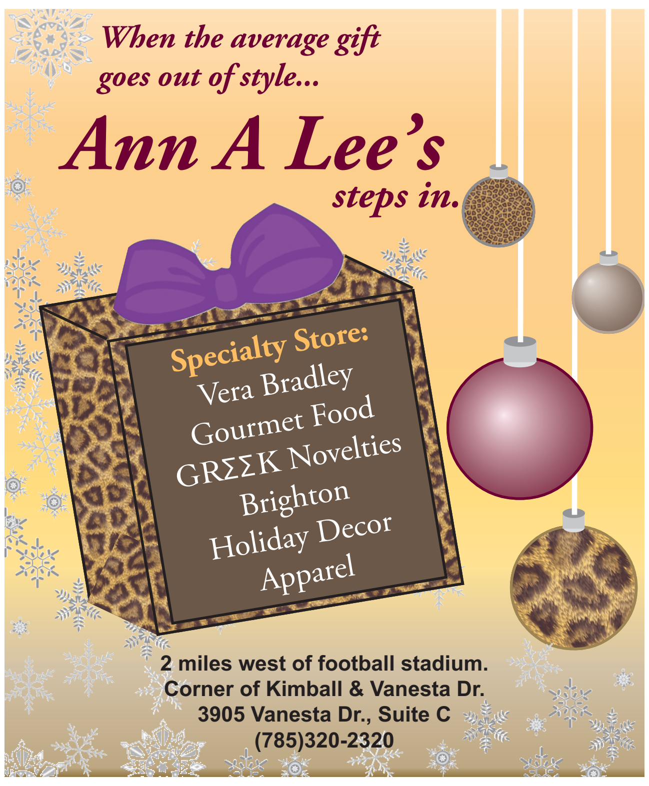
The yearly calendar in India is marked by a number of festivals and holidays, owing to the religious and cultural diversity in India. Some of these festivals are nationally celebrated while others are significant to a particular region. Christmas shares its space with other celebrations, fairs and festivals in different parts of India happening at the same time. All of these festivals do not necessarily account for holidays or breaks, but are just a part of the cultural heritage of India. Some celebrate the culture of the region, some help the economy, some are religious and some are just to get a break from the monotony of daily life.

Starting in mid-December, the southern state of Tamil Nadu hosts the Chennai music and dance festival, also known as the "December Season," which is a celebration of the classical music and dance of South India. The last week of December usually has the Winter Festival in the hill station Mount Abu in the Northwestern state of Rajasthan. Rajasthan opens up its rich culture and tradition to the world during the three days of this festival with performances put up by a number of local artists, such as classical and folk songs, the main folk dance forms of Rajasthan, rowing competitions, lot of color, fun, frolic, warmth and hospitality.

The eastern part of India is not far behind with the Vishnupur festival celebrated in West Bengal between Dec. 27 and 31 in the temple town of Vishnupur, which is famous for its beautiful terracotta temples. This festival received the status of a National Fair because of its immense popularity. Thousands of people come to this fair for different reasons, be it to buy handicrafts and objects of rural artisanry, seashell works, terracotta works, their famous silk saris or to watch performances of the rich musical tradition of Vishnupur. The entire process of making silk is depicted at some places in the fair. Vishnupur has its own school of Indian classical music called the Vishnupur Gharana.

The northeastern state of Nagaland celebrates the Hornbill Festival around the beginning of December. The government introduced this festival to bring together the different tribes of Nagaland, their cultures, traditions and festivals under one roof. This festival is also a tribute to the hornbill, the bird admired by the Naga people.

Of course, New Year's Eve is celebrated all over India on Dec. 31 with great pomp and show. It has been adopted by India as a "festival" because of the long association with British.

This is just a glimpse of the celebrations that take place in India around this time of the year. India, with its cultural diversity, does not fall short of occasions to celebrate. There are festivities all year round associated with seasons, agriculture, religions or simply culture.

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